

## Session 4: Governance: New and Strategic Players

DR. CRAIG KENNEDY

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My job today is to re-open this conversation about the new strategic players, like foundations and NGOs. I really want to get to at least one possible vision for our network, which is: how to create a group of NGOs that are really dedicated to working around the core functions of the UN. One thing that I'm going to bring up is that, I have been listening to these conversations, so I was struck by the fact there are literally thousands of NGOs and millions and millions of dollars that are going to work around WTO issues, and a number of other big multilaterals, but a relatively small number of organizations, and a relatively small amount of money that is invested in the kind of work that I am going to describe around the core functions of the UN. One also gets back the comments that Mrs. Kaul made this morning about the demand for the services of the UN. I think there is something there. NGOs are straightforwardly defined: they don't try to make money, so they are not like business in that respect, they may be more like government, but they don't have the credibility or legitimacy to wield public power like government. They are in a sort of limbo state in between the full profit and the public sector, most of them are legal, (though I occasionally give a speech like this where I talk about the rise of the new NGOs, and I use Al Qaeda as one of my examples, because all the things that they have done are very powerful). Global institutions and organizations are the same thing, with the same techniques that many of us use in the non-profit area, and I'll describe some of these.

NGOs as global players are probably not very new. Go and look at the Nobel Peace Prize winners in '03: of the 84 recipients I think eight or nine of them were NGOs and at least 25 or 30 others were leaders of NGOs. Now, beside the fact that the Red Cross got it four times, there still is something there: that NGOs played an important role on a global scale; but in the last few years, really in the last two decades, I think at least in the US and Europe - but also I was watching Latin America and many parts of Asia and Africa - they have started to assume a new prominence. I think, especially in this area of influence over public policy, I'm not going to focus on all the really good NGOs out there that deliver services, social services in the US that work with the immigrant communities here and in Europe, I'm really going to focus on those NGOs, foundations or others that try to influence the behaviour of corporate power, on one side, and public power, on the other. It's a very interesting task.

There are really three things that these kinds of NGOs do, three products. One is they provide ideas, and sometimes these are positive ideas. You hear something new, a new way that an institution can be structured, or formed; sometimes it's criticism, - I'm sure in this room you say more often it's criticism rather than a positive vision - but they are social ideas with a kind of intellectual content in the conversation. The second thing that they provide is information and research; sometimes it is very serious research, on economic questions or whatever, often and increasingly it is a sort of watch-dog information. The President of the US says something on television; within five minutes if you go to the internet there will be a dozen NGOs out there, saying he was wrong; this is the real fact of the matter, he should have said that, etc. So there is a sort of accountability side to this information function. And a final thing, which I think is very much involved: when I called for mobilization of public support and it comes, sometimes directly, through memberships - anyone that watched some of the great demonstrations in Paris by the farmer groups or some of the attack related groups around the issue can see that - sometimes there is a very direct focus on legislative bodies. One thing

that is very striking in the US is that there are few NGOs that put on big campaigns to, say, force congress to be more serious about a whole set of issues, but on the other hand there is very deep dense network that focuses on environmental issues and others. So sometimes it is a very legislative agenda, sometimes it just focuses on the media, and in fact increasingly that's where NGOs are becoming extraordinarily effective in taking on the mainstream media. And some would say manipulate, others would say enhance, but they are a very effective area. Things have changed dramatically in these last few decades and I think for a couple of reasons. One is for the reason that was said yesterday: there has been a vacuum created by the declining credibility of governments, politicians, corporations and the media. The only group in the US, the only sector, and the only sector in Europe that has gone up in terms of its trust with the public are NGOs in the last decade (and the military). But this vacuum has created a demand among the public, and where from? the media, from the ideas, information, and in a way leadership to give some guidance as to the way things should go. In Europe the civil service and political parties have been for most of the post World War II period the source of ideas on how the state should operate; they have been the source of information on facts and afforded a sort of leadership. I think one of the things that we have seen in the last two years, especially here in Europe - and I think the referenda on the EU constitution are good indicators of that - is this declining faith in the old order to lead Europe forward. It's created a huge demand of NGOs for ideas and information.

Second, maybe the most important thing is tremendous technological advances: the computer, the internet, the cell phone, fax machines: they've allowed NGOs to do much deeper research than it was ever possible to do. I sit in my desk in Washington, and can type in the databases all over the world. We have a young researcher who is just regularly turning out work, that wouldn't have been possible five years ago, because you wouldn't have had access to it. What this means is that a very small organization can leverage huge amounts of data and do creative things with them, and then project them into the public sphere through equally inventive distribution networks. Let me give you one easy example. There is a new conservative group in the US, called PNAC, the Project for the New America Century, that has often been written about in the European press, the mastermind behind the Bush administration, in actual fact, if you went in the PNAC offices, there were two people and an internet connection and three computers, and this was the brain of the new conservative movement. But you can go around and look at other organizations like that, now, there are many. When you see the website you think that there have got to be three hundred people behind this, and when you turn over the cover, you see a single person sitting in Montana at a computer, and this is the organization. This technological revolution has allowed people to distribute ideas much more quickly and allowed people to mobilize others in a very effective way.

The last time that I was here was right after the very tragic attacks in Spain and I went from here to Madrid. When I arrived in Madrid, the thing that struck you, as soon you turned on your cell phone, was that you were getting 'sms'es from people mobilizing against the PP in the elections that were going to be held on Sunday. If you had described to any political operative a decade ago that the cell phone was going to be the way that you turned up voters, that you mobilized attention, they would have laughed at you, and now it's a standard technique that many NGOs use.

The final thing that I want to say, coming to real examples, is the tremendous growth in resources that has happened. One is the growth of big foundations and wealthy individuals, the Bill Gates', the George Soros', but also here in Europe, the banking foundations. There are all sorts of banking organizations that do this kind of work. But it's also interesting to see the number of corporations and governments now that have started their own NGOs because they are seeking credibility, and because they see some value in getting their message distributed through this NGO platform. So for example, we tend to work with a lot of small European governments who don't feel that they always get as

much attention either in Washington or in Brussels as they deserve, and they look to NGOs as a way to leverage their attention. Ricardo I'm sure you have some of these groups, countries as well that you work with. This is becoming a favourite strategy of small countries as a way to leverage their influence but also of many corporations. I'm sure we'll talk about this later.

So let's go to the last two case examples. If you are going to do a map of what is going on right now around the WTO, and just look at the NGO world, it will be a very complicated dense network of organizations that cover at least three quarters of the world. They communicate on a daily basis, they are coordinated, but in a very loose way. But an intense amount of information has changed a simple issue, like the reform of farm subsidies in the US, Europe and in Japan. There are probably fifty or sixty organizations in the US that are working on this, on the domestic side, lobbying congress, working with the media, doing research; they have a link with a growing number of organizations here in Europe and in Japan. There is a larger umbrella of organizations that focus exactly on the Doha Round on WTO negotiations. All of these organizations are funded through a range of sources: mainly foundations, but also a lot of individuals and a large number of governments as well. They are very sophisticated in their techniques, they are often capable now, because of the money that is coming in, to recruit a higher kind of person that was quite impossible before. I think there are a lot people that - even in a Germany, where civil services are paid very well - up and go into the NGO world, because the salary, the work, and a lot of things are equivalent. And you really see this right now in the debate over the Doha Round and the WTO. Very intense, very aggressive, very well-funded, in general pretty effective organizations at work. Now you turn to the UN, and it's true, around some environmental issues you'll find clusters of organizations. But I was sitting here thinking: why is there no pressure either externally or internally from the NGO sector, for the US to adhere to the rules of the UN? I mean the issue that was raised this morning. There is certainly around the WTO: whenever the US threatens that they are going to ignore a judgement within the WTO framework, there is a huge outpouring of pressure, not just from foreign governments, but foreign NGOs, internal NGOs, etc. The business community gets involved, but there is almost nothing like that, that I can think about. Maybe Prof. Luck can. There are some organizations, a few people like think tanks, but frankly not worth comparing to what you could see in the trade area, or in the environmental area, or in many of these other communities, even around the European Union. In Washington there are probably a dozen organizations, which are very well funded and supported to do this kind of work. Something that would still be much much larger than anything that you see around the UN. So I guess one of the things that I throw up for you to think about is how do you create a real valid set of NGOs, networks of NGOs, that are really focused on the UN and, on the one hand maybe enforcing the rules of the UN when very large countries want to ignore them, and on the other hand focused on creative thinking and ideas around that institution, but also selling them to national and other bodies.

AMBASSADOR GIACOMELLI

Sorry, maybe this is an old fixed idea I have; some have already been opposed to it. First, we should stop calling them NGOs, because anything which is defined only negatively is an empty box where you can put everything, from Al Queda on. Now we begin to hear that people call them civil society organizations. That is already a little better, but maybe we should begin to break them up in lots to organize them, because the idea of something which is simply not something else is offensive to me.

DR. KENNEDY

Just a quick comment: one of the most interesting cultural differences between the US and Europe is how they think about these things. In the US, we always

refer to our "non-profits" as defined against the corporate sector: we are not corporations. In Europe, there are always defined as non-governmental: they're not the public sector. And I think that tells you a lot about the culture of the two places.